



Information for Hatter's Helpers What Kids Need To Know About Mercury



Do you know that mercury is a dangerous poison and bad for our environment?
It is **never** safe to play with.

BE SAFE WITH MERCURY

Mercury is the silver liquid inside of a thermometer that tells you how high your temperature is. Mercury is used for other things too. It is sometimes found in batteries, tennis shoes that light up, certain types of paint, and in some electrical switches.

Mercury can be useful to us, but it can also be harmful if it is not handled properly. It is safe when it is inside a thermometer, because you can't touch it. If a thermometer breaks and the mercury leaks out it can be dangerous. It spreads easily and gets into the air. Remember: mercury is a **POISON** and can make you sick if you touch it, eat it or breathe it in.



WHAT TO DO IF MERCURY SPILLS

- Ask everyone to leave the area, close the door, and get an adult right away.
- Have an adult contact the local poison control center, fire department, or public health department for advice on cleanup.
- Open the windows in the area of the spill to ventilate the area.
- NEVER use a vacuum cleaner to clean up a mercury spill. A vacuum cleaner will spread the mercury vapors into the air.
- Don't put mercury down the drain or in the trash. Have an adult call your county waste agency for information on where to dispose of it.

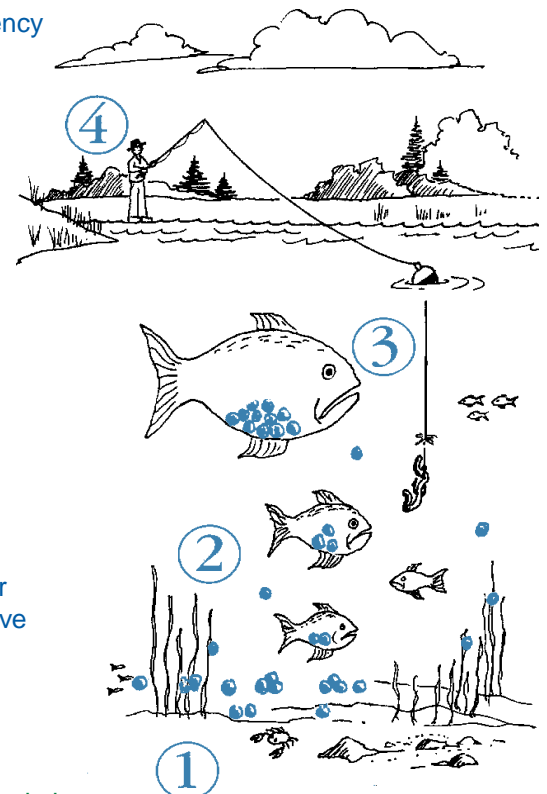
MERCURY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Just a little bit of mercury, the amount in a fever thermometer, is enough poison to make all the fish in a 20-acre lake unsafe to eat! That's a big lake and just a little bit of mercury!

How Does Mercury Get Into Fish and People?

Mercury builds up as you move up the food chain:

1. Tiny animals and plants known as plankton take mercury from the water and mud at the bottom of a river or lake.
2. Minnows and little fish eat a lot of plankton along with the mercury in the plankton.
3. Large fish eat many smaller fish along with the mercury in the smaller fish. The older and larger fish, having eaten so many smaller fish, have more mercury in their bodies.
4. People and animals eat fish along with the mercury in the fish.



YOU CAN HELP -

Talk to your parents and teachers and ask them to help hunt for mercury in the home and at school, and to dispose of mercury safely so that it doesn't poison or pollute.